



Degrees Without Boundaries

**Testimony by Charter Oak State College  
Before the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee  
1:00 p.m. – LOB Room 2E  
February 24, 2011**

Good afternoon Senator Beth Bye, Representative Roberta Willis and members of the Higher Education and Workforce Committee. I am Dr. Shirley Adams, Provost at Charter Oak State College. I am pleased to be able to address you this afternoon on House Bill 5888 (Raised) **An Act Concerning College Credit For Transfer From A Licensed Practical Nursing Education Program Into A Registered Nursing Education Program.**

Charter Oak State College recognizes that there is a shortage of allied health workers in the state and that career paths for LPNs can be daunting. We have been involved with the Office of Workforce Competitiveness, Capital Workforce Partners, the community colleges, hospitals, the Connecticut League for Nursing, and others in helping to develop programs that will help allied health professionals move up the career ladder.

As you are aware, there is a state-wide articulation agreement that allows for LPNs to earn credit for their LPN experience if they are accepted into an RN program at one of the regionally accredited colleges and complete the LPN to RN bridge course and another course at the RN granting school. In most cases, these students are awarded 16 nursing credits upon advanced placement into an Associate degree nursing program.

Charter Oak was awarded a grant, as a result of a request for proposals, from the Office of Workforce Competitiveness through Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF) to evaluate the Connecticut Technical High School System's Licensed Practical Nursing program for adults to determine if any credit could be awarded for the program in order to provide a career path to the RN program at the community colleges. This RFP was a result of Public Act 03-142 enacted in June 2003 establishing a Connecticut Career Ladder Advisory Committee to develop a three year plan to create or enhance career ladder program with projected workforce shortages for the next five years. (Connecticut Career Ladder Advisory Committee Legislative Report, February 2007)

Because of Charter Oak State College's expertise in assessment and because it is authorized to assess non-credit programs to determine if they are equivalent to college credit, Charter Oak was awarded the RFP. Charter Oak had also assessed the LPN programs in 1986 as part of the state-wide Connecticut League for Nursing Articulation model for nurse educational mobility, which then allowed 12, now 16, semester credits be awarded toward the initial component of a nursing program that prepares students for licensure as a Registered Nurse. For LPNs who are admitted to such a program in Connecticut, upon successful completion of a three-credit bridge course through Charter Oak and a one-credit bridge course through the Registered Nursing program, the nursing credits are awarded.

Charter Oak received the RFP in March 2007. The MOU allowing for the acceptance of credits earned in the LPN program to transfer to the Connecticut Community Colleges was signed in March 2009. As a result of the MOU, students who obtain LPN licensure through preparation at one of the CT Technical High School LPN programs, can realize up to thirty credits directly applicable to the requirements for completion of one of the Connecticut Community College's Associate degree Nursing programs.

When Charter Oak does an assessment of non-credit programs, it has to ensure that it does not appear to be allowing another institution to "ride" on Charter Oak's regional accreditation. Charter Oak also will not assess a non-credit program offered by another college unless invited to do so by the top administration of that college because it is the faculty who control the curriculum in a college. In the case of the CT Technical High School System, there was interest on their part, on the part of the community colleges, and on the part of the Office of Workforce Competitiveness that the evaluation be conducted by one agency that all community colleges would accept. Although the CT Technical High School System is not a college, it is accredited by the same regional accrediting association as Charter Oak.

The assessment process was a lengthy process. First an advisory committee was set up with representatives from hospitals, the Connecticut League for Nursing, State Department of Education, Department of Higher Education, CWEALF, Connecticut Hospital Association, the CT Technical High School System, State Legislator, and from the various LPN and RN programs around the state, including representatives from the proprietary schools, community colleges and state university system. Charter Oak hired faculty to review all aspects of the program—the curriculum, assessment, outcomes, text books, etc. The review ended in the following recommendations:

Math—not college level. A separate college-level math course should be considered as an admission requirement.

Psychology—with the addition of research process and psychological theory, as well as a more comprehensive textbook, the curriculum would equal a 3 credit Lifespan Development course.

A college introduction to psychology course needs to be completed by the students before graduating from the LPN program.

Anatomy and Physiology—Not equivalent to A&P taught at the community colleges. Numerous recommendations were made to bring the science up to the level of the prerequisite biology course for A&P.

Nursing Content—Made numerous recommendations from scope of practice to raising achievement standards.

They also recommended that students should come in with at least three credits of college level English composition.

These recommendations were made to the CT Technical High School System. The Technical System accepted these changes and worked with their staff and with Charter Oak staff to implement the changes. Once the curriculum changes were made, the revised curriculum was reviewed again by the faculty reviewers. The changes went to the Board of Nursing for approval June 2008. The revised curriculum went into effect in fall of 2008. No other LPN program expressed an interest in revising their curriculum to meet those standards.

Charter Oak is a firm believer that education can take place in many ways and as a result has a very liberal transfer policy and has the special assessment and portfolio process for students to earn credits. Since proprietary schools are not colleges, Charter Oak does not accept work done at those schools in transfer. If students from a proprietary school enrolled at Charter Oak, they could test or portfolio out of courses.

One also needs to recognize that the mission of proprietary schools is not the same as the mission of colleges. That is why there are different accrediting associations and processes based on the mission of the institution. The proprietary nursing schools are there to train nurses in the skills of nursing at the LPN level. They were not designed to transfer into RN programs at two- or four-year colleges. Even if you look at LPN programs offered by community colleges in other states, they have liberal arts courses built into them so the students can move into the RN program or they require students to take liberal arts courses before they are accepted into the RN program.

Charter Oak agrees that the RN shortage needs to be addressed. However, if we are going to address part of that need by developing articulation agreements between the LPN programs at the proprietary schools and the college's RN programs, we need to make sure that we are maintaining the standards of the college's RN programs, that the curriculum of the LPN program needs to articulate seamlessly, and the rigor of the LPN program needs to be such that the students come prepared to succeed in the RN program.

Thank you for allowing Charter Oak to speak to HB 5888.

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